

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 01338 01 OF 02 300941Z

12
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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 1338

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SUBJECT: TOURISM

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17717,

FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS REFTEL B WITH
PARAGRAPHS NUMBERED CORRESPONDINGLY.

1. THE PROSPECTS FOR A SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH IN FOREIGN TOURISM
IN THE USSR OVER THE NEXT DECADE ARE PROMISING WITH THE
PROVISO THAT ADEQUATE HOTEL SPACE AND SUPPORT FACILITIES ARE
PROVIDED. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MAIN ADMINISTRATION FOR TOURISM
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 01338 01 OF 02 300941Z

IN A PUBLISHED INTERVIEW LAST JUNE, MOSCOW 8884, SAID THAT THE

SOVIET GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING ON A DOUBLING OF TOURISTS EACH WAY EVERY FIVE YEARS THROUGH 1990, WITH A PARTICULARLY LARGE INFLUX EXPECTED FOR THE 1980 OLYMPICS. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY'S CALCULATIONS THESE TARGETS WOULD REQUIRE AN ANNUAL INCREASE OF ABOUT 14.5 PERCENT. LATEST AVAILABLE SOVIET FIGURES INDICATE THAT THE NUMBER OF INBOUND TOURISTS ROSE FROM 2,909,000 IN 1973 TO 3,447,000 IN 1974, UP 7 PERCENT. OVERALL INCREASE IN TURNOVER WAS ABOUT 14 PERCENT, APPROXIMATELY THE SAME RATE THE SOVIETS ARE PROJECTING FOR THE NEXT DECADE. THE 1974 FIGURES FOR INBOUND TOURISTS BROKEN DOWN SHOW 1,888,000 FROM "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES, 1,291,000 FROM CAPITALIST COUNTRIES AND 278,000 FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THE OUTBOUND FIGURES INCLUDE 1,331,000 TO "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES, 513,000 TO CAPITALIST COUNTRIES, AND 380,000 TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. BASED ON PAST STATISTICS MOST RAPID GROWTH IN THE FUTURE WILL BE IN NUMBER OF WESTERN TOURISTS VISITING USSR AND SLOWEST WILL BE THE NUMBER OF SOVIETS VISITING WESTERN COUNTRIES. THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PUBLISH ITS HARD CURRENCY EARNINGS FROM TOURISM NOR HAS THE EMBASSY BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN ANY SOVIET PROJECTIONS OF FUTURE EARNINGS. SOVIET TOURISM OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, HAVE STATED THAT HARD CURRENCY EARNINGS FROM TOURISM ARE IMPORTANT ECONOMICALLY TO THE USSR. AND IN VIEW OF THE CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE SUBSTANTIAL SOVIET HARD CURRENCY TRADE DEFICITS, INCREASED EARNINGS FROM TOURISM WILL BECOME ALL THE MORE SIGNIFICANT. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT HAVE AVAILABLE ESTIMATES ON THE GROWTH OF WORLD TOURISM, BUT THE SOVIET PROJECTIONS SHOW A VERY SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH RATE, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT IS RECALLED THAT THE EFFORT TO BRING LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN TOURIST TO THE USSR IS BARELY A DECADE OLD.

2. SOVIET OFFICIALS HAVE CANDIDLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE VOLUME OF TOURISM COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN INCREASED EXCEPT FOR THE LACK OF ADEQUATE FACILITIES TO MEET DEMAND. ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL AMEXCO REPRESENTATIVE, THE HOTEL SPACE PROBLEM BETWEEN NOW AND 1980 IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD WILL BE VERY ACUTE. THE SOVIETS ARE APPARENTLY PLACING A THREE-DAY LIMIT FOR STAYS IN EACH MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD FOR TOURS AND THEY ARE TRYING TO PROMOTE ITINERARIES WHICH INCLUDE OTHER CITIES. THE SITUATION IS EXPECTED TO EASE SOMEWHAT AFTER 1980 WHEN HOTELS BUILT FOR THE OLYMPICS WILL BECOME AVAILABLE FOR HOUSING TOURISTS. THE KEY

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 01338 01 OF 02 300941Z

QUESTION THEN WILL BE HOW MANY OF THE NEW FACILITIES WILL BE TURNED OVER TO INTOURIST FOR OPERATION. TOURISM UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD HAVE BEEN GREATER IN RECENT YEARS HAD ADEQUATE FACILITIES BEEN AVAILABLE. CERTAINLY INCREASES ON THE ORDER OF 25 PERCENT WOULD HAVE BEEN DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE FOR THE SOVIETS. BUT THERE ARE DEFINITE UPPER LIMITS IMPOSED BY SEVERAL FACTORS INCLUDING: THE UNDERDEVELOPED STATE OF THE WHOLE SERVICE SECTOR IN THE USSR; LABOR SHORTAGES; INEFFICIENT AIR AND HOTEL RE-

SERVATION SYSTEMS; AND CONTINUING CONCERN ABOUT PERMITTING LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN TOURISTS IN THE USSR WITHOUT ADEQUATE "SUPERVISION". THESE PROBLEM AREAS, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE RESERVATION SYSTEMS, WILL PERTAIN FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. OVERALL, THE CENTRAL PROBLEM WITH THE SOVIET TOURIST INDUSTRY TODAY IS THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE DESIRE OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE HARD CURRENCY EARNINGS FROM TOURISM AND ITS FAILURE, FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REASONS, TO GIVE CONSTRUCTION OF TOURIST FACILITIES SUFFICIENTLY HIGH DOMESTIC PRIORITY TO MEET DEMAND. THE RESULT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN WHICH SOVIET TOURISM OFFICIALS HAVE TURNED TO THE WEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN HOTEL CONSTRUCTION, BUT ONLY IF FINANCING, MATERIALS AND LABOR ARE PROVIDED AND NON ONGOING MANAGEMENT ROLE IS DEMANDED. IN SHORT, THE NEED FOR EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AND THE SOVIETS ARE CALCULATING IT CAN BE OBTAINED ON THEIR OWN TERMS.

3. ACCORDING TO SOVIET OFFICIALS, 20,000 ADDITIONAL BEDS WILL BE ADDED IN MOSCOW BY 1980 AND BY 1990, THROUGHOUT THE USSR, IT IS PLANNED TO BUILD NEW HOTELS WITH A TOTAL CAPACITY OF 150,000 BEDS, UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE MAIN ADMINISTRATION FOR FOREIGN TOURISM. NO SPECIFIC INVESTMENT PLANS FOR TOURIST FACILITIES ARE, HOWEVER, PUBLISHED IN THE USSR. THE SOVIETS, AS INDICATED BY INTOURIST'S RECENT, ALBEIT UNSUCCESSFUL, ATTEMPT TO PURCHASE AN IBM COMPUTER TO UPGRADE ITS CENTRAL HOTEL RESERVATION SYSTEM, RECOGNIZE THE CURRENT SYSTEM'S WEAKNESS AND ARE SEEKING TO REMEDY IT. A US COMPUTER RECENTLY PURCHASED BY AEROFLOT SHOULD HELP IN IMPROVING THE AIRLINE TICKETING SYSTEM.

4. BASED ON SOVIET OFFICIALS' DISCUSSIONS WITH WESTERN HOTEL FIRMS AND TOURISM REPRESENTATIVES, THE USSR APPEARS ANXIOUS TO SECURE SUBSTANTIAL FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 01338 01 OF 02 300941Z

FINANCIING OF HOTELS, PARTICULARLY IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1980 OLYMPICS. THREE AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN CONCLUDED TO DATE. THE FIRST WAS THE OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM DEAL FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER, WHICH WILL INCLUDE A HOTEL. THE SECOND IS AN ARRANGEMENT WITH A FRENCH GROUP HEADED BY LAZARD FRERES TO CONSTRUCT AS MANY AS SEVEN HOTELS. ONE CONTRACT WAS SIGNED LAST OCTOBER TO BUILD AN 8,800 ROOM HOTEL IN MOSCOW REPORTEDLY INVOLVING APPROXIMATELY DOLS 148 MILLION IN CREDITS. FRENCH EQUIPMENT AND BUILDING SUPPLIES WILL BE USED TOGETHER WITH FRENCH AND POSSIBLY YUGOSLAV LABOR. THIRD, A CONTRACT REPORTEDLY WAS SIGNED LAST DECEMBER WITH A SWEDISH FIRM, SKANSKA CEMENTGJUTERIET, TO CONSTRUCT A 1,000 ROOM HOTEL IN LENINGRAD FOR APPROXIMATELY DOLS 100 MILLION. LABOR, EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS WILL BE SWEDISH. ALL THREE FACILITIES ARE TO BE FINISHED BY THE END OF 1979, AND ALL THREE CONTRACTS

ARE ON A TURN-KEY BASIS WITH NO CONTINUING MANAGEMENT ROLE FOR THE FOREIGN FIRM. THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER FOREIGN, PRIMARILY US FIRMS, IS THE REFUSAL OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT A CONTINUING MANAGEMENT ROLE FOR THE FOREIGN FIRM IN ANY HOTEL IT MIGHT FINANCE AND CONSTRUCT IN THE USSR. ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS ARE NOW MAINLY WITH FIRMS NOT SEEKING A MANAGEMENT ROLE. ONE US FIRM, ROBIN INTERNATIONAL, IS NOW NEGOTIATING TO CONSTRUCT UP TO SIX HOTELS IN MOSCOW AT APPROXIMATELY DOLS 50 MILLION EACH ON A TURN-KEY BASIS. EQUIPMENT AND LABOR WOULD BE FOREIGN. FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLE, AND ROBIN IS SEEKING SOURCING IN EUROPE. NEGOTIATIONS ARE ALSO PROCEEDING WITH US-BASED TOWER INTERNATIONAL AND REPORTEDLY A CONTRACT TO CONSTRUCT A HOTEL MAY BE SIGNED IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. IN ADDITION, THE SOVIETS ARE NEGOTIATING WITH AUSTRIAN, WEST GERMAN, SWEDISH, BRITISH, AND FINNISH FIRMS.

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 01338 02 OF 02 300954Z

12

ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

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AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 1338

5. THE USSR TO DATE HAS HAD VERY FEW HOTELS CONSTRUCTED BY WESTERN FIRMS. FINNISH FIRMS BUILT THE HOTEL VIRU IN TALLIN AND HAD A SUBSTANTIAL ROLE IN CONSTRUCTION OF THE HOTEL LENINGRADSKAYA IN LENINGRAD. THE YUGOSLAVS HAVE BUILT HOTELS IN SOCHI AND YALTA WHICH ARE USED FOR FOREIGN TOURISTS, AND ASSISTED IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPPING OF THE HOTEL BELGRADE IN MOSCOW. VACANCY RATES ARE MINIMAL OR NON-EXISTENT GIVEN THE OVERALL SHORTAGE OF HOTEL SPACE IN THE USSR. THE FOREIGN FIRM HAS NO MANAGEMENT ROLE IN THE HOTEL.

6. THE MOSCOW TRADE CENTER HOTEL WILL BE PARTIALLY FINANCED WITH A DOLS 36 MILLION US EXAAM BANK CREDIT EXTENDED FOR THE WHOLE PROJECT. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY PROVIDED 80 PERCENT OF THE CREDITS FOR THE LAZARD FRERES AGREEMENT ON CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 01338 02 OF 02 300954Z

TERMS OF 7.5 PERCENT INTEREST WITH REPAYMENT TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 8.5 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION OF THE HOTEL. THE TERMS OF THE SKANSKA CONTRACT ARE NOT AVAILABLE HERE BUT REPORTEDLY THE ORIGINAL SWEDISH GOVERNMENT CREDITS FOR THE SKANSKA/INTER-CONTINENTAL HOTEL CORP. (IHC) JOINT VENTURE ARE TO BE UTILIZED. THE REPAYMENT TERMS UNDER THE FINNISH AGREEMENTS ARE ALSO NOT AVAILABLE BUT PROBABLY EITHER ARE ON A LONG-TERM CREDIT BASIS OR UNDER THE USSR-FINLAND CLEARING AGREEMENT. IN ALL THE ABOVE CASES, REPAYMENT SCHEDULES WERE FIXED AND NOT TIED TO HOTEL REVENUES OR OCCUPANCY RATES.

7. A STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF CONSTRUCTION TIME WHEN FOREIGN FIRMS ARE INVOLVED IN HOTEL CONSTRUCTION IS DIFFICULT TO MAKE IN VIEW OF THE LIMITED FOREIGN PARTICIPATION. THE ONE EXAMPLE AVAILABLE IS THAT CONSTRUCTION OF TWO SOVIET HOTELS, ONE IN RIGA BUILT WITH SOVIET LABOR AND MATERIALS, AND THE VIRU IN TALLIN BUILT BY THE FINNS, WAS INITIATED AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME IN 1969. THE LATTER WAS COMPLETED IN 1971-72 AND THE FORMER IN 1974-75. IN GENERAL, WE ESTIMATE THAT CONSTRUCTION TIME IS CUT IN HALF WHEN A WESTERN FIRM IS INVOLVED IN A PROJECT IN THE USSR. WORKMANSHIP, MATERIALS AND DESIGN IN THE FOREIGN-BUILT HOTELS ARE SUPERIOR TO THE LOCAL EQUIVALENT.

8. THE USSR HAS A PRIORITY SYSTEM FOR ACCOMMODATING TOURISTS, WITH HARD CURRENCY TOURISTS COMING FIRST, FOLLOWED BY TOURISTS FROM CEMA-MEMBER COUNTRIES AND THEN DOMESTIC TOURISTS. THIS SYSTEM IS MOST EVIDENT IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD. THE HARD CURRENCY TOURIST, IN RETURN, IS CHARGED SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER ROOM FARES, EVEN AT OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES, THAN THE OTHER TWO CATEGORIES. PRIORITIES ALSO EXIST IN PLACING FOREIGNERS WITH FIRST PLACE GOING TO LARGE GROUP TOURS, THEN WESTERN BUSINESSMEN, AND FINALLY INDIVIDUAL TOURISTS. THE LATTER

ARE PLACED OUTSIDE CENTRAL MOSCOW AT NON-INTOURIST HOTELS IF SERIOUS CROWDING DEVELOPS.

9. THE USSR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WILL CONTROL THE HOTEL PORTION OF THE MOSCOW TRADE CENTER BUT SOME INTOURIST INVOLVEMENT IN RESERVATIONS AND OPERATIONS SEEMS LIKELY. ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS YOUTH GROUPS, TRADE UNIONS, AND MINISTRIES DO OPERATE THEIR OWN HOTELS IN MOSCOW AND IN SEVERAL OTHER CITIES. THERE IS NO DISCERNIBLE SHIFT AWAY FROM INTOURIST TO THESE OTHER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 01338 02 OF 02 300954Z

ORGANIZATIONS IN HOTEL OPERATION AND PROCUREMENT. SOVIET OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, THAT INTENSE BUREAUCRATIC STRUGGLES TAKE PLACE OVER CONTROL OF EXISTING HOTEL SPACE AND PARTICULARLY OVER THAT UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

10. THE AGREEMENT SIGNED IN MAY 1974, WITH IHC/SKANSKA TO BUILD HOTELS IN MOSCOW, LENINGRAD, AND KIEV REMAINS DEADLOCKED OVER SOVIET REFUSAL TO PERMIT A MANAGEMENT ROLE FOR IHC IN HOTELS WHICH IT FINANCES AND CONSTRUCTS. THE BEST EVIDENCE OF LACK OF PROGRESS IS THAT SKANSKA HAS NOW APPARENTLY SIGNED ITS OWN AGREEMENT FOR HOTEL CONSTRUCTION. PARA 4 ABOVE DISCUSSES CONTRACTS AND ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH WESTERN FIRMS FOR HOTEL CONSTRUCTION ON A TURN-KEY BASIS. CLEARLY, FRENCH, SWEDISH, FINNISH, WEST GERMAN, AND SOME AMERICAN FIRMS ARE WILLING TO PROCEED ON THIS BASIS. THE REAL QUESTION FOR SOVIETS WILL BE HOW TO TREAT THE MANAGEMENT ROLE ISSUE IF THE CURRENT POLICY DOES NOT PRODUCE ENOUGH CONSTRUCTION AGREEMENTS FOR HOTELS AND THE OLYMPICS LOOM EVEN CLOSER. THE TWO RECENT SUCCESSES IN SIGNING TURN-KEY TYPE AGREEMENTS MAY WELL, HOWEVER, ENCOURAGE SOVIET OFFICIALS TO DIG THEIR HEELS IN FURTHER.

11. THE PERCENTAGE OF WESTERN TOURISTS VISITING THE USSR ON PACKAGE TOURS IS VERY HIGH, PROBABLY IN EXCESS OF 75-80 PERCENT. AIRLINES FROM THE UK AND SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES, AMONG OTHERS, OFFER VERY INEXPENSIVE PACKAGE TOURS TO THE USSR. HOTEL RATES HAVE INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY IN THE USSR, AT LEAST MATCHING THE RATE OF INFLATION IN THE WEST. A SHARP JUMP OCCURRED IN 1973 IN RATES FOR BUSINESSES MAINTAINING OFFICES IN HOTEL ROOMS. ACCORDING TO AMEXCO REP, IN THE PERIOD 1974-76, RATES FOR GROUPS AT INTOURISTS HOTELS INCREASED BY APPROXIMATELY 13 PERCENT ON A WEIGHTED AVERAGE BASIS, THE RESULT MAINLY OF THE EXTENSION OF THE PERIODS OF THE "HIGH SEASON" AND "SEASON" AND THE SHORTENING OF THE "OFF-SEASON" PERIOD. RATES FOR INDIVIDUAL TOURISTS INCREASED IN THE SAME PERIOD BY 39 PERCENT ON A WEIGHTED AVERAGE BASIS, WHICH INCLUDES ELIMINATION OF THE "OFF-SEASON" CATEGORY AND EXPANDING THE TERM OF THE "SEASON". MOSCOW 17717 REPORTS THE 1976 FARES AND HIGHLIGHTS MAJOR CHANGES OVER 1975 RATES.

12. SOVIET PLANS TO ENLIST WESTERN ASSISTANCE IN OLYMPIC-
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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 01338 02 OF 02 300954Z

RELATED HOTEL CONSTRUCTION IS DISCUSSED IN PARAS 3 AND 4.
THS POSITIVE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD WESTERN INVOLVEMENT IN
HOTEL CONSTRUCTION WILL LIKELY CARRY OVER INTO OLYMPIC FACILITY
CONSTRUCTION, AGAIN PROVIDED FINANCING AND LABOR ARE ARRANGED
BY THE WESTERN PARTY. SOVIET PLANNING, HOWEVER, DOES NOT SEEM
SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TO POINT OUT SPECIFIC AREAS WHERE ASSISTANCE
MIGHT BE SOUGHT. DISCUSSION HAVE BEEN HELD WITH THE LAZARD
FRERES GROUP ON CONSTRUCTION OF FACILITIES AND WITH ARTHUR
ANDERSON AND CO. ON AUDITING ACCOUNTS FOR THE OLYMPICS.
SOVIET OFFICIALS ARE PUBLICLY CONFIDENT THEY CAN COMPLETE
FACILITIES ON TIME AND ACCOMMODATE THE EXPECTED 300-400,000
SPECTATORS. THE COMFORT OF THE LATTER REMAINS IN SOME DOUBT,
HOWEVER, AS SOVIET OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THAT MANY OLYMPIC
VISITORS WILL BE HOUSED IN NEW SOVIET APARTMENT BUILDINGS, MOST
OF WHICH WILL BE LOCATED FAR FROM CENTRAL MOSCOW. THERE
HAVE ALSO BEEN HINTS THAT DORMITORIES AT MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY
MIGHT BE UTILIZED. IT IS PLANNED TO CONSTRUCT AN OLYMPIC
VILLAGE NEAR MICHURINSKIY PROSPEKT IN MOSCOW WITH SOME 12,000
PARTICIPANTS HOUSED THERE. NEW STADIUMS, SWIMMING POOLS, AND
GYMS ARE TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF MOSCOW.
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